

**every walk i've ever taken has been in your direction**  
**by iwillbeyourgoal**

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**Summary:**

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(nancy realizes lots of things in a very short period of time)

## **every walk i've ever taken has been in your direction**

It's April when Nancy wakes up one morning and realizes something is... off. She looks around to check her surroundings – yep, this is definitely her room. She wonders if she'd forgotten homework or to study for a test, but no, that's not it either.

She doesn't put her finger on it until breakfast that morning, when it comes to her with a start: She didn't have any nightmares that night.

“What is it, Nancy?” her mother asks – it's just the two of them, as Mike and their dad are on a camping trip with the other boys – and she realizes she must have gasped.

“Oh, I just...” she trails off. She considers lying to her for a second, but the desire leaves as soon as it comes. There's been enough lying lately. Swallowing and running her cloth napkin through her fingers absentmindedly, she continues. “I just realized I didn't have any nightmares last night.”

Karen frowns slightly and rests her fork on her plate. “Is that not normal for you?”

“Not since... not in a long time, no,” Nancy replies softly.

“Oh, sweetheart,” her mother coos, reaching a hand across the table to cover her daughter's. “I wish you would have told me. But none last night – that's good, right? That's a big step.”

And Nancy supposes she's right. It's nice not to wake up in cold sweats multiple times per night, if she was able to get to sleep at all. But still, something gives her pause. She isn't sure what but she smiles at her mom anyway, nodding. It is a big step, of course it is.

She kisses her mother on the head and tells her she's going out for a walk. Karen just smiles at her and squeezes her hand. It's comforting, and Nancy feels good knowing that no matter what happens, this woman will always be in her corner.

Pulling a light blue cardigan on, she heads out of her house with no

real destination in mind. Hawkins is a small enough town that she doesn't really *need* to, either – walk in any direction and you'll end up somewhere you know.

In any case, she ends up at the Byers' front door. She doesn't even try to pretend that that's not where she wanted to end up. She's only gone over to their house a few times – helping them renovate, dropping Mike off at Will's, studying with Jonathan.

Jonathan. They haven't spent the night in a while but they talk on the phone nearly every day, and eat lunch at school even more frequently than that. After her surprisingly amicable breakup with Steve a month ago, they've taken to bringing their food into the school's darkroom so they can avoid the rest of the school and talk while Jonathan develops photos. Those periods in the low light laughing with him have meant more to her than she could probably convey.

But she hasn't been to his house that much. Maybe because if she does then a line might be crossed that she'll never be able to go back on. (*Would I want to?* she asks herself, to which she replies *I have no idea.*) And yet here she is, knocking loudly if a bit tentatively on the door.

Ms. Byers answers, and Nancy thinks it really cannot be understated how much happiness can change one's appearance. The woman, who looked so haggardly distressed during Will's disappearance, now seems to glow every time Nancy sees her. Jonathan's told her how much better it is at home, even better than before Will was taken, and how much closer their family is. She's really happy – if any family deserves good fortune, it's the Byers.

“Oh! Hi, Nancy,” Joyce says, smiling. “What brings you around?”

“I just wanted to drop in and say hi,” she replies honestly, because she really does. “How have you been? It's been a while since I've been over.”

“Oh, we're just great, sweetie. Do you want to come in?”

“I'd love to, thanks.” Joyce steps back and lets her in. The wall with

the letters has been wallpapered over, but the Christmas lights are still strung up, and Nancy actually likes the affect. She maintains it gives the home a warm, comforting feel. Jonathan explained that Joyce thinks they owe Will's return to the lights, so it's kind of an homage. Nancy can understand that.

She sits down in a cushy chair in the foyer as Joyce ventures into the kitchen. "Would you like some iced tea? I just made some fresh today," she calls.

"Yes, please. Do you have lemon?"

"Of course we do," comes the answer from behind her. Her heart flutters (slightly annoyed, she tells it to stop.) She whirls her head around to see Jonathan standing against the wall behind her, smiling slightly. "What kind of barbarians would we be if we didn't have lemon?"

"The worst kind," she plays along, the fluttering increasing. "Hi."

"Hi yourself," he said, crossing to her. "Didn't know you were stopping by."

"I didn't really know I was myself. I just went on a walk and sort of ended up here."

"Well, we're glad you did," Joyce says warmly as she brings in a tall glass of tea. "I'm going to the backyard to read, so you two catch up, but you come and say goodbye to me before you leave, alright, Nancy?"

She smiles brightly at the woman. "Yes, ma'am."

They wait, inexplicably, for her to leave the house before they resume speaking.

"So," she begins. She's not sure why she's nervous; she really has no right to be around him.

"So," he repeats. "How's it going?"

"It's... it's good, actually," she says, brow knit. "I... it's so strange."

“What is?” He sits across from her on the small dining room table someone donated to the family.

She isn’t sure why this is proving so difficult to say, but she tries to power through it. “I didn’t have any nightmares last night.”

Jonathan cocks an eyebrow. “I’m confused. Is that not good? Isn’t that, like, the ultimate goal here? No more nightmares?”

“No, it is,” she insists. “It’s just... I don’t know. It’s been every night for months now. In a weird, kind of twisted way, it’s been like, the only constant in my life.” Her nose wrinkles, and she continues, “Except...”

Jonathan waits for her to finish, but when she doesn’t he gently urges, “Except... what?”

“Except you,” she says softly, looking at him with a tinge of confusion mixed with admiration. “The way you’ve... been there for me. When you didn’t have to be.”

“Of course I had to be,” he replies incredulously. “You’re my best friend. You mean the world to me.”

And she hasn’t really considered it until now, but yeah, he’s her best friend, too. She wasn’t sure when it happened – whether it was one night in bed, or walking in the halls, or eating sandwiches in a dimly lit room – but somehow Jonathan Byers became the closest friend she’d probably ever had, except for maybe Barb.

This led to another sudden realization.

“Oh, my God,” she mutters, brow furrowed.

“Wh—what? Was that too forward? Did I say something—”

“No, no, that’s not it,” she says in a daze. “I just realized what it was.”

Jonathan leans forward, as if maybe proximity is the answer to the fact that she isn’t making any sense whatsoever. “What *what* was, Nance?”

“My nightmares. They’re gone, I mean, they were at least for a night, and it’s – it’s because of you. I’m... I’m healing,” she says with wonder. “I’m somehow getting better, and I just know it’s because of you.”

Jonathan is usually pretty reserved with his emotions, but the softness that Nancy’s statement brings could warm her for years to come.

“Nancy, I... that’s really great,” he says. “Really. But it wasn’t just me, you know. I know I tell you this all the time, but you’re so strong. I might have helped, but I think you’re... healing yourself.”

The sentiment is simple, but comes across so powerfully that it almost knocks her over. She feels, for the first time in a while, that there is good in her. That she can be strong. And she can do it for herself.

She looks at Jonathan, this sweet, wonderful boy, her best friend, and she’s happy. And she wants him to be happy, too – so she reaches out to him and pulls him towards her until they meet in a kiss.

As far as first kisses go, the form isn’t Olympic grade, but the feeling that it inspires in Nancy is pure, and it’s more than she could have asked for in months. Jonathan smiles – actually, really smiles – against her lips, and it is the most wonderful sensation.

They stop a few moments later and he just looks at her in awe.

“What?” she laughs. “I’m not that good.”

But he’s not having any of her silliness. “I’m just so amazed that I have someone like you in my life,” he says, voice a bit hoarse.

This is all too much for her, she decides, and she rushes to hug him so forcefully that he falls off the table, taking her with him. He lets out a short, shocked laugh as she tumbles on top of him and, for the first time ever, lets his hands rest on her hips as he pulls her and his face linger near hers.

“Your mom’s outside,” she murmurs, eyes on his lips.

“She’s a slow reader,” he counters, smiling a bit.

She looks at him, drinks him in, and instead of giving into her urges (yet), she softly but insistently kisses him again, then lays down so her head is resting on his chest.

“You know what, Jonathan Byers?” she says, craning her neck to look at him.

“Hmm?”

“You’re pretty okay.”

“Back at you.”

They’re contorted in a weird, somewhat uncomfortable position on the floor of his living room, and Nancy actually does want to drink her iced tea, but for now, she’s content with staying where they are.

She’s healing. There isn’t much more she can ask for at the moment.

**Author’s Note:**

this is a lot cheesier than i usually write, but i’d like to think i gave it a nice realistic spin!

also: [iwillbeyourgoal.tumblr.com](http://iwillbeyourgoal.tumblr.com) is the other location for my madness. come talk to me about stranger things!!